



**Quarterly Report**  
**NEPAL: CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 367-G-00-00097-00**  
**January 1 to March 31, 2002**

**I. SUMMARY**

Although many Nepalis had high expectations that their country would experience prosperity and development with the arrival of democracy in 1990, some have come to realize that without an active and informed citizenry, democracy is unresponsive to citizens' needs. Since 1994, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has participated in a broad national effort to increase Nepalis' familiarity with and participation in government institutions and political processes. In July 2000, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NDI launched a civic and voter education program throughout Nepal aimed at increasing Nepalis knowledge about their electoral system and the workings of their democracy. Through forums and workshops, educational materials and radio programming, NDI informs Nepalis about their government and electoral system and how they can become active and involved members of the political process.

During this quarter, NDI conducted the following civic education activities: 1) prepared for and conducted a teacher training workshop; 2) distributed textbooks and teacher's guides; 3) conducted a civic education coordination meeting; and 4) participated in the visit of a civic education expert to Nepal. The Institute is drafting a monitoring and evaluation report, which NDI will submit to USAID. Civic activities under this grant are complete, but will continue under a separate grant funded by the U.S. State Department.

During this quarter, the Institute conducted the following voter education activities: 1) completed the production of a second cycle of radio shows; 2) held seven district-level voter education forums; and 3) distributed resource manuals and voter education booklets. Activities thus far have revealed that NDI is contributing to increasing citizens' knowledge about their electoral system. Activities are temporarily suspended as NDI awaits approval from USAID for an extension on this grant to resume efforts to assist the Election Commission in educating voters and orienting election officials, party leaders and civic representatives.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. Civic Education**

Nepalis receive little, if any, civics training in school. As a result, the adult population often lacks the necessary foundation for becoming active and informed citizens in a democracy. To address this educational gap, key leaders in Nepal's education community have been working to introduce civics training in school curriculums. As a result of their initiatives, many schools around the country now offer an elective civic education course entitled, *Contemporary Society*.

NDI has been working in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Higher Secondary Education Board, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), academics and local civic and political leaders to produce a civic education textbook, entitled *Civics in Nepal*, and teacher's guide for use in the *Contemporary Society* course. The Institute has conducted 20 teacher-training workshops covering more than 50 districts to inform teaching professionals and civic and political leaders about the content of the new materials as well as how to effectively use the materials to relay civics messages to students.

### **B. Voter Education**

Although some educational material about Nepal's election laws and polling practices has already been distributed throughout the country, the materials continue to target highly educated citizens. Because approximately 60 percent of Nepalis are illiterate, much of the existing material is inaccessible to voters. As a result, the majority of citizens know very little about how their electoral process functions and what role they can play in ensuring credible and fair elections. In addition, the Election Commission (EC) recently established 30 new district-level offices. The staff in these offices lack orientation regarding their responsibilities and the citizens have not been informed about what role these offices play or how to make use of their services. Furthermore, many of the local civic and political leaders are unaware of their responsibilities during the polling process. Due to these circumstances, violations of the Election Code of Conduct, designed to prevent voter intimidation, vote buying, illicit fundraising, spending and electioneering at the polling stations, are common in Nepal.

In response and in collaboration with the EC and district election offices, NDI initiated a voter education program and conducted district-level forums in 15 districts, bringing together 500 political and civic leaders, as well as district election officials. The Institute also conducted an extensive voter education program to increase citizens' awareness of, and participation in, the electoral process. The Institute's activities target the public and include specific outreach to women and various ethnic groups as well as to district leaders involved in the election process. Through material production and distribution, discussion forums and radio programs, NDI is relaying messages about voters' rights and responsibilities, election officials' duties, voter registration, the Election Code of Conduct and procedures for reporting election-related violations. NDI's forums include a session on security procedures and focus on the roles of the army and police in election campaigns and on Election Day. The program also includes general messages about the benefits of participating in the democratic process.

In July 2001, USAID provided NDI with a \$226,696 extension to conduct additional voter education activities. With this money, NDI is holding forums in an additional 15 districts where the EC has offices. NDI is also planning to hold workshops at the local level

in five parliamentary constituencies in an effort to bring messages about voters' rights and responsibilities to more people. The Institute also produced radio programs, which it plans to air on national stations, and printed additional voter education booklets and resource manuals, which it is distributing.

### ***Political Update***

On February 21, the House of Representatives ratified a motion to extend the State of Emergency, declared by the King in November 2001, for three more months. The motion required two-thirds ratification and, following the Maoists' massacre of nearly 140 government, army and police officials in Achham earlier that week; it passed more easily than initially expected, with 194 votes out of 205. As a result of the extension of the State of Emergency, activities for the civic and voter education programs were delayed. In addition local elections, scheduled for the spring or summer of 2002, are now likely to be postponed. Thus, NDI/Nepal cannot follow its originally scheduled timeline for voter education activities.

Based on consultations with the Election Commission and USAID, and taking into account the current security situation in the country, the voter education program timeline has been revamped. The Institute is also adjusting activities in coordination with USAID and the U.S. Embassy to respond to security concerns outside the Kathmandu Valley. While this voter education program was slated to end on February 28, 2002m, NDI requested a no-cost extension from USAID. The Institute is awaiting final approval of this extension and has suspended all activities.

During March, Nepal Country Director Mark Wallem visited Washington, D.C. to meet with officials at the United States Department of State as well as USAID. During his meetings, Mark discussed the current civic and voter education programs being conducted in Nepal. He was able to provide a political briefing to these representatives and discuss future programming possibilities. Mark shared lessons with D.C. staff from the civic and voter education programs in Nepal and learned about other successful civic and voter education programming the Institute implements elsewhere.

## **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### ***A. Civic Education Program***

#### ***Preparing for and conducting teacher training workshops***

NDI conducted a civic education workshop in Kathmandu, the last of a series of 20 workshops. In January, participants from districts affected by Maoists, including Dang, Bardiya, Banke and Surkhet, attended a workshop at the Nepal Law Campus. Participant turnout was high; between 30 to 40 teachers and principals attended the workshop. The trainers familiarized attendees with the *Civics in Nepal* textbook and teaching guide and reviewed ways to use these materials effectively in the classroom. The workshop was interactive and attendees participated in role-plays. They also wrote lesson plans and reviewed effective questioning techniques to use in the classroom.

#### ***Distributing additional textbooks and teacher's guides***

NDI distributed the textbook and teacher's guide to all workshop participants and provided them with extra copies to take back to school libraries. The HSEB also distributed the books to principals and teachers at schools around the country.

### ***Holding coordination meetings with civic leaders and donors***

On January 22, NDI conducted the fifth Civic Education Initiative meeting at the American Center. A total of 16 representatives attended including individuals from NGO's, INGO's and government agencies working in the fields of education and civics. During the meeting, participants introduced themselves and briefly spoke about their work. Following these introductions, Dr. Trailokya Nath Upraity, founder of the Society for the Promotion of Civic Education (SPCE), NDI's local partner, spoke about his organization's civic education program. Later, Ramesh Prasad Gautam, Secretary General of the SPCE, presented a paper entitled "The Concept of Civic Education in Nepal." A group discussion followed, after which participants decided that the next meeting should be held in April and would be hosted by the SPCE.

### ***Participating in the visit of a civic education expert to Nepal***

In the first week of February, the American Center invited a civic education expert, Arizona State University Professor Dr. Robert J. Stahl, to Nepal to participate in a series of talks and meetings. On February 4, he attended an NDI organized Civic Education Initiative meeting at the American Center. The purpose of this meeting was to share information with Dr. Stahl and to give Initiative members a chance to interact with him. Immediately after the meeting, NDI's workshop trainers met with Dr. Stahl to share information and gain valuable tips on conducting trainings.

## **B. Voter Education Program Activities**

### ***Completing the production of voter education radio shows***

In November 2001, the Institute hired a consultant to help produce the second cycle of 10 radio shows and held several meetings with him to discuss the content of the radio programs. Popular male and female artists have worked on the production of the mini dramas, each of which is approximately 15 minutes long. This reporting period, the Institute produced 10 Nepali radio dramas, all of which have been approved by the EC. The Institute is planning to broadcast the dramas on Radio Nepal and on other popular FM stations throughout the country.

### ***Holding district level forums***

During this reporting period, the Institute conducted seven district-level forums in Parsa, Bardiya, Chitwan, Sarlahi, Dhanusha, Mohatari and Siraha. Participants from government, media, political parties and NGOs attended these two-day forums. Each forum had around 30-39 participants and had an almost equal gender balance. Representatives from the EC along with district election officers led discussions on democracy, free and fair elections, voters' rights and election procedures. Additionally, they held discussions on the role of political parties and codes of conduct for elections. NDI's forums also included a session on security procedures and focused on the roles of the army and police in election campaigns and on Election Day. The local and national press covered the forums.

### ***Distributing a resource manual and voter education booklet***

This quarter, NDI distributed about 1,000 resource manuals and 12,000 voter education booklets. The Institute is distributing these booklets at forums primarily through the EC and district election offices but is also sending them to political and civic leaders and election officials for distribution in districts where NDI has already held forums. District election officers are distributing these booklets during the seminars organized by other NGOs

within their respective districts. In addition, at the National Conference for Women Local Representatives, NDI distributed copies of the booklets to women who were elected to the National Association of Village Development Committees (VDCs).

#### **IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

*Objective: Increase Nepalis knowledge of their electoral system; and*

*Objective: Increase Nepalis awareness of the basic norms of democracy and their human rights.*

##### **A. Civic Education**

- NDI provided training to more than 640 teachers and principals covering 332 schools in over 50 districts on effective ways to use the new course materials. With the current teacher to student ratio of approximately 1:40; this means that approximately 25,600 students will benefit from the teacher-training workshop.
- Forty-two participants from Maoist affected areas traveled to Kathmandu to attend NDI's civic education workshop.
- NDI helped distribute over 1000 *Civics in Nepal* textbooks and 300 teacher's guides to students and teachers around the country. The HSEB houses additional copies of the books and is distributing them to various schools.
- NDI worked successfully to increase the number of schools offering the civics course. When NDI began the program approximately five schools offered *Contemporary Society* as an elective. More than 44 schools are now requesting books for the course and intending to offer it.
- NDI garnered support among principals, teachers, donors and civic and political leaders, for civic education programming in Nepali schools. Widespread support for civic education is apparent through articles printed in local newspapers, comments made by local leaders, donors' praise for NDI's program and donors' requests for additional civics materials to use in their education projects.
- NDI met requests from teachers and principals for more *Civics in Nepal* textbooks and training manuals and additional training workshops.
- NDI assisted participating organizations in sharing information and discussing ways to cooperate on civics programming.
- NDI built strong relationships with local organizations and government agencies involved in civics and education.

##### **B. Voter Education**

- NGO leaders, political party leaders, local election officials and civil society leaders from Parsa, Bardiya, Chitwan, Sarlahi, Dhanusha, Mohatari and Siraha received and studied voter educational materials and provided national election officials with

feedback on how those manuals could be improved for greater clarity and presentation at the grassroots level, and discussed methods of distributing these materials to the general public.

- Over 248 district level political party, NGO, and civil society leaders and local election officials were provided with resource materials to increase their capacity to educate party members and the public in election laws, procedures and voting rights.
- Local leaders in seven districts received a refresher course in election laws and conduct, as well as on election-related security procedures, including the role of the army and police in election campaigns.
- NDI built strong relationships with EC officials. District election offices are being strengthened, increasing their profile in their communities and building better relationships with civic and political leaders in their respective districts.
- NDI distributed 7,000 voter education booklets and 1,400 manuals to the districts where new election offices have been established and to women leaders from VDCs throughout the nation. NDI is working to provide user friendly, Nepali language materials to community leaders working to educate the public on the rights and responsibilities associated with elections.

## **V. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS**

### **A. Civic Education**

This quarter, NDI successfully increased many Nepalis knowledge about their democratic system. Through meetings and the distribution of materials, NDI inspired interest and commitment among donors, government agencies and local NGOs for introducing civic education into formal and informal curriculum throughout Nepal. The Institute made civics textbooks and teacher's guides available for the *Contemporary Society* course. These resources will serve as effective teaching tools for teachers long into the future, helping to inform young people about how their government works and how to solve local problems using the democratic process.

There has been a great deal of positive feedback from Nepali academics, civic leaders, government representatives, teachers and principals on the usefulness of the civic education materials and the benefits of the teacher training workshops. Increasingly, schools are being exposed to the *Contemporary Society* course, and in turn, more Nepalis to civic education.

### **B. Voter Education**

NDI is succeeding in increasing the public's knowledge about the electoral system. NDI is not only succeeding in informing the public through civil society and political leaders that participate in NDI's forums, the Institute is also building the capacity of Nepali government, political parties and civil society groups to educate the Nepali public about elections. Activities already conducted under this grant are helping to foster a greater understanding of political institutions and processes and to prompt Nepalis to become more involved and active in the politics of their communities and nation. The activities are also informing adult citizens about basic democratic principles and increasing contacts between,

and understandings among, political leaders, civic representatives and election officials regarding substantive election rules and regulations.

The Institute has been able to encourage women's participation in these forums and to seek out active women leaders by collaborating with its Women's Candidate and Representative Training programs. Women leaders trained in NDI's 1997 WCT program participated in this program at district-level forums in Dhanusha, Chitwan and Sarlahi districts.

#### **IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

##### **A. Civic Education**

NDI will complete a monitoring and evaluation report for this program, which the Institute will submit to USAID. With funding from the U.S. Department of State, NDI will build upon civic activities conducted under this grant through follow-on training for teachers and principals and through the production and distribution of additional civics materials.

##### **B. Voter Education**

Due to the ongoing state of emergency, NDI could not conduct activities as planned. The program timeline has been reformulated in consultation with the EC and USAID, taking into account the current security situation in the country. The voter education program was slated to end on February 28. The Institute has requested a no-cost extension from USAID to continue activities under this grant. As NDI awaits approval, activities have been suspended. If approved, NDI will complete the voter education workshops at the district and constituency levels, air the radio programs and distribute additional voter education booklets.